

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2005

The Honorable James Loy
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Loy:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the proposal in the President's fiscal year 2006 budget that combines grant programs for critical infrastructure into one program. The target infrastructure protection grant program would force seaports to compete with other transportation modes and sectors for security funding, and will put seaports at a disadvantage.

This grant proposal is also not in line with Congress' intent when it passed the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2004. The law requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish and maintain a grant program to assist ports with the implementation of federal security requirements. As a conferee who worked on this legislation, I know that the grant program is not supposed to lump ports in with other transportation systems.

Furthermore, I am disappointed with the level of funding that has been requested. As a Member of Congress who represents a coastal state, I will not support a budget that undermines the security at our seaports. According to U.S. Coast Guard estimates, ports will spend \$5.4 billion over the next ten years to comply with federal security requirements. According to the American Association of Port Authorities, ports will need \$400 million year for the next seven years to adequately improve seaport security. Since ports would not have a dedicated funding source, the Administration request of \$600 million will not give the nation's port authorities the support they need to reduce their vulnerability to terrorist attacks.

I urge the Department of Homeland Security to correct this problem immediately by ensuring that ports and other critical infrastructure receive the necessary funding make our country more secure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security